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Subject: The Problem of Joy and Suffering in Life.

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A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE

PROBLEM OF JOY AND SUFFERING IN LIFE.

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 23, 1869.

"HER ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."—PROV. iii. 3.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."—JOHN xvi. 33.

THE Old Testament is a bright and sunny book, and represents virtue and obedience as bringing forth the most pleasant fruits; and one, in reading it, would be apt to get the idea that a moral and God-fearing man must be supremely happy. The promises abound, to the one side, of obedience; and the threats abound, to the other side, of disobedience. But if one turn to the New Testament, another style of teaching seems to prevail. There is a ministration of sorrow; and it is declared that if a man will live righteously, he shall suffer tribulation. "He shall be happy," says the Old Testament; "He shall be unhappy," says the New Testament. "All his ways shall be ways of peace," says the Old Testament; "He shall take my cross," says the New Testament. "Obedience, virtue, prudence, piety, are a crown of riches," says the Old Testament; "A crown of thorns they are," says the New Testament.

What shall we do between these two differing representations? This seeming conflict of statement runs through the Bible. There are in the New Testament intimations of the same doctrine that breaks out in such power in the Old. There are echoes in the New Testament of those very promises of earthly joy in obedience which so superabound in the Old Testament. Religion is joyful; and yet, crucifixion is its symbol. The way of piety is called *peace;* and yet, we are commanded to put on the whole armor, and be ready, as warriors, to fight at any hour. Are these the symbols of peace? We are to rejoice; and yet we are to deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow Christ. We are to inherit the world; and yet we are to forsake the world, and not be conformed to it. The Old Testament

LESSON: Prov. iv. 1-18. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 513, 437, "Shining Shore."

seems to exclude suffering from its ideal saint; and yet the New Testament sets forth the divine man as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

One class of minds goes to these diverse representations, and by elective affinity takes the joyous side, and simply does not meddle with the other. There are men who go through the Bible taking out its promises, its joyous, hopeful, cheering, comforting passages, and elect these things to themselves. They do not see that there is any controversy or conflict, simply because they do not consider the other side at all. They let it alone. As the disciples, when they walked through the fields eating corn, *rubbed the ears in their hands*, to get rid of the chaff; so there are a great many people who take the Scripture and rub it in their hands, and cut out the part that they like, and throw the rest away. Therefore there are many persons who talk about religion as being a life of supreme and continuing joy, and forever appeal to persons to become Christians because it is so joyful. Well, it is joyful—in spots.

These persons are fairly matched by the ascetic spirits, who see the suffering element in the New Testament and in the Old, and make it the very prime experience of life. They believe in joy; but it is that which is to be found hereafter. The true ascetic throws forward his joy, and he has it only by expectation. Here he has to wear the girdle and the sackcloth. Here he has to play the martyr, in order that he may play the saint and the conqueror hereafter.

But the greater number of men vibrate in perplexity between these two representations. They have a notion that true religion confers supreme happiness; but they are far from being fully happy. They are far from being very happy. And when they look round about them in the church, they see there all gradations, from sleepy good nature and indolent content, at the top of the scale, along down to the utmost disquiet and aspiration made unhappy. But then, they account for it, without any very close reasoning or examination, on the theory that persons are not happy who are religious, because they have not enough religion. This, as a mere matter of fact, is very true; but really, it does not seem to be an adequate philosophical statement to cover the whole meaning and harmonize these two elements of joy and sorrow that the Bible abounds in. This class are nearer the truth than either of the former extremes; but they hold it in an empirical form.

Now, can not we get a larger view? Can not we throw light upon this problem of the mingling of joy and sorrow in this world? I propose it, not so much for the gratification of curiosity, or for the sake of exercising the philosophical ingenuity; but because it has become indispensable to discuss such themes. Every age has to make

a new statement of moral facts in the light of the consciousness of that age. The old statements held good for their time. They satisfied the yearnings, they met the moral necessities of the aspiring souls of their day. But the world goes on, and new statements become indispensable. If any age gains any thing it lifts the next one up to a higher plane; and you must take new observations from that higher plane, and not change the truth, but recast the statements of it, and newly form the theories which cover all the voluminous facts of moral consciousness among men. Besides, it is out of this large view of the mingling of joy and sorrow in life that we shall derive, as I trust, in the sequel, some of the most potent motives for right living, and some of the most comforting views for our weakness, infirmities, and afflictions.

If the race of men were ideally perfect, they would be perfectly happy. The ultimate divine idea in man is that he should be a creature organized to produce happiness in every one of his multiform faculties. Although happiness is not the end and aim of being, it is yet the invariable concomitant of moral perfection. Happiness may be said to be one of the signs, therefore, of ripeness in any faculty. In other words, if the mind of man is imagined as standing in the complete condition for which it was designed, it would be in harmony with universal law, with universal being, with its own self; and it would, under the divine purpose, ring out true and perfect happiness. It is an agent complex, but made to be happy.

Religion, then, regarded as a theory of a perfect state, is right in pronouncing itself a *way of pleasantness*, and a *path of peace*. If a man could but walk perfectly in the way of religion, he would be perfectly happy. The way *is* pleasant, and all the paths *are* peace; and yet, along that pleasant way there are groans and sorrows innumerable; and along that way of peace there is struggle, turmoil, combat, and confusion. But the divine plan and intent, the ultimate state, is a state of supreme blessedness. It is the *teleological* condition—if you have read modern books, and accepted their terminology. The nature of man is one which, when brought fully up to its divine ideal, will produce constant happiness.

But man is not born into an ideal state—into a perfect state, even. On the contrary, he is born further from his nature than any other creature on earth. Some creatures are born right up to their nature. They have their whole nature at birth. The fly never grows a particle. It never takes on a faculty, nor augments a faculty. It is a complete fly, it is a patriarch, the minute it is hatched. There is no expansion to it. As you go down on the scale to the lowest form of animated creation, you shall observe that, there, all the faculties a creature is to have, he has in their full, plenary power the moment

he starts; but you will observe, as you go up in the scale, that there is this distinguishing peculiarity: that as animal nature rises in structure and in scope of being, the space between the birth-point and the full possession of itself is augmented and widened. And how long it takes an animal to come to its maturity, measures somewhat the place on the scale of animal creation where it stands. The lower down you go, the nearer the creation is to perfection when it starts; and the higher up you go, the further it is from perfection when it starts. And nothing is so far from it as a man. There is nothing so far from the perfection of even his physical powers as a man. Born as a babe, what is a man that neither sees nor hears; that distinguishes nothing; that knows nothing; that is as near to pulp as any thing can be? And yet that child is a son of God, and is destined yet, through evolution and education, and sanctifying grace or inspiration, to rise and be but little lower than the angels. But oh! how long the journey from the cradle to the crown! Man is not born into his perfect state. He is born just as far from it, it would seem, as God could put him. It is not an accident, either, I take it. It is a characteristic fact, not to be lost sight of in any moral theory of facts respecting the human family in this mortal state.

Regarding man historically—that is, through the whole race, and the periods of it—he was born at the point at which the animal stops, and moral intelligence begins. To be unfolded from this seminal point, and grow up to the full spiritual manhood in Christ Jesus, is the real problem of historic times. Races of men, savage, uncivilized, animal, began at the very lowest conceivable point. There is no revelation that gives us any thing to the contrary. There is no true knowledge that does not point in that direction, namely, that the race originated in conditions just a little above the animal, but with the capacity to go on immeasurably beyond them. On the whole, but slowly, with wide intermissions and many retrocessions, and with a vast waste, the race has steadily grown away from its animal conditions, and is surely reaching upward toward its ideal spiritual state. As a race, it is going to give evidence of a far higher condition than might be suspected from any thing we can see by looking backward; and you should remember, when you speak of the human race, that nature does not lie backward. Nature to us lies forward, always. That is our nature to which we come when we are unfolded and developed by the education of God's spirit—not that with which we started. For God put us as far from himself as his arm could reach, when he started us.

Each generation in this race is set back, as it were, and has to do for itself what the whole race had to do—namely, find its way up from nothing to something; and from something to the highest form

of development. Every child is born an animal. It is that and nothing else, literally, at the beginning. Every child has to learn how to control itself as an animal. The lamb does not. Dropped in the morning, by night it sports over all the pasture, nimbler, if possible, than its own dam. But the child that is born waits its year before it even knows how to walk. It does not know how to find its foot or its hand except through slow feelings and rude gropings after it, through months, and months, and months. A child has to learn from the beginning every thing. It knows absolutely nothing. And that which the race is doing on the great scale, each individual of it is doing in his generation.

It becomes easier, every age, to do it. That is to say, every single individual man has to learn how to use his physical organization; how to use his intellectual faculties; how to use his social capacity; how to employ his moral nature. These things are not made known to him. They are not set into him like machinery, to work themselves. They are things which belong to that great process of education which is going on in the whole world, in regard to the whole race, and in regard just as much to every individual of that race. At first it was slow and operose; but it becomes easier in every age, because each man now born has the accumulated wisdom and experience of all that went before him. Books are only another form of giving immortality to the best part of men that lived hitherto. They are the resultant of men's lives in their highest forms. All that past races knew, thought, felt, found out, invented, they passed on down, so that when men are born now they do not have to find every thing out by such tedious methods as men did in earlier times. A child born in the wilderness is born into a condition where roads are to be made, and bridges are to be constructed, and churches and school-houses and dwellings are to be built, and furniture is to be made, and every thing has to be done; but a child born in a civilized community finds thousands of things ready for his use, and is spared the trouble of discovering them, so that he can go on to higher ones. In earlier periods men had to go on, part by part, finding out intellectual, moral, and social problems. As far down as the time of the patriarchs, men did not know any difference between their children and their oxen. Both were their property. It used to be the case that a man wooed his wife with his pocket. He bought her. If any thing had been said about *courting* a wife, men would have looked upon it as an invasion of their prerogatives. They were so low down in the scale of development that they did not know the difference between intellectual, and moral, and physical qualities—between an organized intellectual and moral being, and a lower organization of mere material things. Therefore men bought

and sold their servants; bought and sold children; bought and sold wives; bought and sold every thing. It was a low and undeveloped condition of things. But we have been born into a state of the world, thank God, that is advanced far beyond that—though I can remember when men read the Bible and preached those old doctrines; as though six thousand years' experience had not taught the race any thing, and the world had not learned any thing. It has, however, learned a great deal; and now, when men are born into the world, there is a vast accumulation of science and art. Vast treasures in every direction meet us. And this abbreviates the work that we have to do. Each individual has to go over the same path that the race has gone over. But the race, having gone on before, has broken roads, and set up signboards, so that every individual that follows after goes faster and surer than those who preceded him. And the world is better fitted to receive and educate its children than it was once. Children are not born into such desolate conditions as they used to be—in civilized nations, at any rate.

Then the force of great laws in hereditariness is increasing. For God has brought the most powerful motive to bear on the parental heart—namely, the law that we roll over on our children the qualities that are dominant in ourselves. Where a man lives in virtue, the presumption is that his children will take on virtue easier than if he had not. If you live for intelligence, the presumption is that your children will be educated easier than if you had not. And if a whole generation of men are brought successively through periods of education, their posterity will begin with a hereditary educating impulse which will avail them immensely. It is a law which was revealed as far back as the Old Testament, that *God will visit the sins of the parents upon the children to the third and fourth generation.* And this law is making it easier and easier, in every condition, for men to grow away from their animal conditions.

But whatever progress has been made, it is still true, just as really of the very best as of the most neglected, that men are born empty of holiness. They are at the furthest extreme and remove from perfection. There is not one single man born virtuous and good. We are born negative. Every single person born has the necessity of growing up into Christ in all things. There is no more universal proposition than this: "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God."

This is the truth which I suppose men were feeling after, and which they really, to their own inward thoughts, did embody in their phrases, when they described men as being depraved, and doubly depraved. They were feeling after fundamental facts, which are all-important in any ministration. I should prefer to dismiss that term

"depraved," as not according to our later views, and as not best expressing the facts as they exist. I reject it because it is on one side covered with prejudices, and on the other side with misconceptions; yet that which was meant by the term is unquestionably a truth of fundamental importance. It is true that by nature all men are without God. All men are in this sense alienate from God. It is thus also, and in the same way, that men are without knowledge; alienate from skill; ignorant of wealth, of self-government, of every thing. They do not know how to think, nor to discriminate, nor how to love, nor how to have moral inspiration. When men are born, in the earlier stages of their lives all the preparations are with them for these experiences; but not only are they born without holiness, but this is only a partial statement: they are born without knowledge, without refinement, without skill, without any thing but a pack, packed up tight, which they are to unpack and learn how to use. For a man is a great bundle of tools. He is born into this life without the knowledge of how to use them; but he may learn how to use them, and how to use himself according to the laws of his nature, according to the world in which he lives, and according to the society to which he belongs.

The problem of human life is, how to unfold what God has put into you; how to make it more and more; how to coördinate it, so that the faculties shall rank themselves together, and march in organizations; so that it may go away from the animal toward the spiritual, and live more by the power of the spiritual world than by the power of the senses in the material world. This is man's business here on earth. And when you say that a man is born depraved, if you mean that he has no holiness, I believe so, too. He is without God. But then, he is without any knowledge of his own father and mother. He does not know his brothers and sisters. He is ignorant of his neighbors. He has no consciousness of his own nation. Spread before the child the country's flag, the sight of which thrills us with such patriotic emotions, and what does he see in it but a plaything? It has no associations to him. He has no knowledge concerning it. Every thing is to be learned. This is the organic decree. God did not make men perfect. He made them pilgrims after perfection.

As I have said, men are born with all the faculties of reason; but not with knowledge. That they are to find. Men are born with social natures; but not with social loves and refinements of experience. These they are to work out. Men are born with moral sense; but not with knowledge of its fruits, its inspirations, its various experiences. It is the business of their life to find out these things.

To teach all this vast lore of experience, God has established what I may call five schools. The first school into which a man is

born is the school of the family, where parental love is the schoolmaster. But he is just as much born into a school of the material world. And it is a part of the teaching of the family to induct the child into a knowledge of his physical organization, and into a knowledge of physical actions, so that he shall learn what is good and bad; what is sharp and blunt; what is high and low; what is water and fire. It is a part of our early experience to learn how to live according to the law of the material globe.

Then comes the school of civil society—or, organized social life on a large scale. Men have to learn that. And in learning that, they learn what are civil laws; what are the rights of their fellow-men; and what are the modes of getting along with men. In learning it, they are still further to develop the faculties, and still further to bring them into subjection to the laws of organization.

Then comes the school of business, or creative industry, which some men seem to think is a necessary evil, which a man has to run into in order to get a mouthful of bread, and then run out of in order to be pious! But the great kingdom of work is a part of God's church on earth. It is there that God teaches us moral ideas. We learn a part of our lesson in the family; a part of it in the material world, dealing with matter; a part of it in civil society, dealing with the laws and the interests of men; and a part of it from the creative force exerted upon matter, which is industry. But all this is not something exceptional, and a necessary evil in this life. It is a department of that one great school in which men are to find themselves.

Then comes the school of the church, which is the last, and in which men learn moral and spiritual truths. Some of these things men have learned, if they have been brought up rightly, before the church reaches them; but here is the culminating influence in God's grace working through the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and sent home by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This is the highest department of the great university of life. Beginning in the family, and going through the physical world, through the civil world, and through the industrial world, up into the moral or spiritual world—this is the unity of that preparation which God has made by which men, born at nothing, shall learn how to take out the store and treasure of their faculties, and educate them, develop them, coördinate them, control them, carry them up from step to step, until they are made perfect men in Christ Jesus.

These are simple facts that I have been stating—not theories Men are born just as I have said they were. They are educated just as I have said they were. I believe they are facts that are not accidental, but that indicate the divine mind. At any rate, it is the best light I can get at present, in my age. Looking at the difficulties which

men have to contend with, looking at the evils which beset them on every side, I see no other theory on which you can explain these unquestionable facts in respect to the way in which men come into this world, and in respect to the way in which the world takes care of them, develops them, and prepares them.

It is in the light of such a development that we see the relation between sorrow and joy in the Christian scheme. Joy is an attribute of man's nature drawn out and perfected. It abides with him. Its perfect form will be the fruit of his highest state. He is living toward joy, if he is living toward development. If he is rising higher and higher, he is becoming what God meant every nature should become—a perfect enginery for the production of manifold joys in sublime harmonies. This is that which we are all seeking. This is that which the race will ultimately reach.

But sorrow, on the other hand, is that conflict which every person experiences as he is endeavoring to learn. Sorrow is the non-observance of laws, whether it be through ignorance or momentary willfulness. Sorrow is the conflict of men on the way to themselves. It is the conflict of men with their lower nature, when they are attempting to take possession of it and control it by their higher faculties. It is the participation of each individual with something of the sadness which belongs to the whole economy in which he lives. In other words, it is a part of his social liability. It is the incident of growth from a lower to a higher state. When men are seeking themselves, and do not know how to walk, and fall down, that is *hurt*, if it is bodily; and if it is moral, it is *suffering*. If a child puts its hand in the fire, it is *pain;* and it is pain that will keep the child from ever putting its hand there again. He has learned something. If a man, being selfish, and having once suffered from the results of selfishness, were as wise as the child that puts its hand in the fire, he would avoid selfishness in the future; but that is not the way of the world. A man, walking along a path at night, as long as it is smooth feels that he is in the path; but by and by, falling into some quag, he says, "What! quags in good roads?" And then he says, "Oh! no, I am not in the road. The road is pleasant and easy; and if I get my feet into the mud, it is because I am not in the road."

What, then, is the fact but this: that if a man only knows the right path, he goes on without suffering, and that if he suffers, it is because he is not in the right path? Suffering is God's regent of the universe, saying, "The way is a way of pleasantness, and all its path are peace; and therefore when you suffer it is because you are out of the way." So there is something to be learned in this direction. When the boys whisper and laugh, instead of studying their lessons, there comes a gentle rap, not hurting them much, which says, "The teacher is behind

you, and you are not doing your duty;" and they gather up. And so there are inconveniences in life rapping us men, and saying, You are not doing your duty. But when boys are ugly and malicious and quarrelsome, and they are hitting each other, and pinching each other, and pinning each other, the schoolmaster comes behind them with a most vehement souvenir, that teaches them more—namely, that they are wicked, and are doing wrong, first, in neglecting their lessons; and, secondly, in inflicting pain unnecessarily upon each other. And in life the things that men suffer are testimonies of the ever-watchful Master that is behind you, and saying, "You are neglecting your duty, and you are doing wrong." The way in which you should walk is a pleasant way, and suffering, in this world, is nothing but that necessary chastisement and pain which God has infixed throughout the whole divine scheme, in order to keep men from wrong paths, and keep them going toward that higher state where they are to emerge into immortality and glory.

Therefore it is that the two ideas are perfectly harmonious and consistent. You might call suffering the labor-pain of virtue, being born into a higher state out of a lower. It is not a thing desirable in itself; but instrumentally it is desirable, as a motive, as a spur, as an incitement, as an inducement, in men, to rise to a higher state.

If this be so, I remark,

1. The search for the origin of evil, about which so much has been thought and said, is a mistaken search, in the direction in which men are looking for it. When men have squared the circle, and found the philosopher's stone, and discovered perpetual motion, then they will find this too. But they will not find any of them. They are, all four of them, mistakes. The reason why God made seeds instead of perfected fruit is the only question. Why did God make men at the bottom, and then say to them, "Climb clear up to the top?" Evil is nothing in the world but a part of the divine system by which we are to be unfolded. And if men were made to find their way up from nothing to something, through various gradations, and pain and suffering are but incitements and pressures to help them on, the question is not, "What is the origin of evil?" for the origin of evil is but another name for the origin of suffering. And suffering is not evil. You might as well ask what is the origin of a man's suffering when he is learning to drive nails, and he hits his thumb instead of the nail, as to ask what is the origin of evil. He does not know how to strike straight: that is the origin of it. What men call "evil" originates from their not knowing to carry their faculties. They were born without knowing it.

Here is a man with forty plenary powers in him, every one of which is a prince, every one of which is seeking development, and

every one of which is left to find out, by experiment, its own nature, and capacity, and design. He was born without knowledge, for the most part, of himself. And, do you ask what, was the origin of his mistakes? Simply the fact that he did not know, and was born not to know. What is the reason that a man who is lost in the woods travels, in finding his way out, ten miles, when he might get out by traveling one mile? Because he did not know the road, and he kept wandering about here and there to find it. And so men are wandering about in life to find themselves. And what are called sins are to be limited to those wrong things which men do on purpose. The rest are infirmities which God looks compassionately upon, and sorsows over. He punishes sins which are in the nature of purposed wrong-doing, and pities the infirmities which men fall into, not knowing how to do any better, or only partially knowing how to do better.

Let us not, therefore, look about and say, "How does evil get into the world?" for that question will only be answered when you can tell why God preferred to make men as he did make them, the sum of nothing, with the capacity to develop into infinite power in infinite directions. It pleased him to do it.

2. We see, from the statements that have been made, if they be accepted, what is the true and proper meaning of *self-denial.* One of the earliest lessons that a man learns is to be an animal. He learns the animal functions first. He learns the faintest animal relations of truth. Matter is the thing that first addresses itself to him. A child learns the physical globe before it even learns its mother. The mother is learned through the child's material wants. The first education of every human being in this world is to teach him to be a little animal. But very soon there begin to be conflicting claims in the child. And now comes the question of priority. And every once in a while there will come a time when there will arise a little conflict in the child's mind as to which shall rule, those faculties that represent the affections, or those that represent the appetites, and when one or the other must prevail. And if the child triumphs, and the affections prevail, that is self-denial. It is affection saying to passion, "You are lower than I, and you must step down there and wait for me." That is self-denial. It is a higher faculty making a lower one keep down, and know its place.

Then, the moment the affections begin to get strong, there are moral sentiments which rise up and assert their authority over the affections. Questions present themselves where persons are called to decide whether they will follow their affections or their duty. Duty rises in every soul, and says, "I am higher than affection." And if there is a question as to which shall govern, duty must govern, and not affection. And affection experiences suffering.

And this is self-denial. It is self-denial of a lower feeling for the sake of giving liberty and power and influence to a higher one.

Every time a true act of self-denial takes place, two things happen: first, a lower feeling suffers, because it can not have its own way: and, secondly, a higher feeling rejoices, because it has its own way. There are two feelings that enter into every act of self-denial: one of sorrow, because a lower faculty is brought into subjection; and the other of joy, because a higher faculty is brought into the ascendency.

Now see how this clears away all the absurd notions that have prevailed in this world about the mission of pain and suffering. Many persons say, "I ought to deny myself." They are going along in life very happily, and do not perceive any particular reason for changing their course, but they have read that a man must deny himself, and they say to themselves, "What shall I deny myself in? I wish I knew how I could deny myself." And they go to work and invent modes of self-denial. One person says, "I will not eat any butter." So he denies himself. Another person says, "I enjoy a good coat as well as any body else; but, being a Christian, my duty is to deny myself; so I will get linsey-woolsey and let the broadcloth go." That is his self-denial. Men have no idea of what self-denial is. They are floundering after something, they do not know what. They are searching for an opportunity for self-denial, not understanding that to deny one's self is simply to put down a lower feeling, in order to give a higher feeling ascendency. You have an opportunity for self-denial every time you see a man. If you meet a man that you dislike, put down that hateful enmity of soul. That will be self-denial. Every time you see a person in misery, and you shrink from relieving him, then relieve him. That will be self-denial. Do not say, "I am so busy I can not stop to see that little curmudgeon in the street;" but stop. God says, "You are all brethren," and, ragged and dirty as as that child is, it is related to you in the larger relationship of the eternal world; and you must not be so busy as not to have time to care for him. If your selfishness says, "I can not stop; I do not want to be plagued with these little ruffians of the street," and a diviner element in the soul says, "Stop! neither business nor pleasure has any right here: religion and humanity and duty must rule here;" and if you obey the dictates of that divine element, then you deny yourself. You put down mean indifferences and pestiferous selfishness for the sake of giving a royal tone of joy to your upper nature, do you not?

"In honor preferring one another." This injunction suggests an ample field for self-denial. You that invent sack-cloth and hair-mittens to rub yourselves with, so as to get up self-denial and suffering; when you sit and hear your brother in the law, of the office next to yours, praised, what is it that makes you hold your

breath? "Oh!" you say, "that is envy. I ought not to feel so." There is a blessed struggle. What is born out of it? If you rise superior to that comparison between yourself and him, and say, "I thank God that he is esteemed more than I am; I love and honor him, and I am glad to see his name go up, and it does not hurt me to have his name go above mine," then there is a glorious self-denial. What are the elements of it? Why, putting down your own selfishness, and putting up the brotherhood feeling.

No man, then, need hunt among hair-shirts; no man need seek for blankets too short at the bottom and too short at the top; no man need resort to iron seats or cushionless chairs; no man need shut himself up in grim cells; no man need stand on the tops of towers or columns, in order to deny himself. There are abundant opportunities for self-denial. If a man is going to place the higher part of his nature uppermost, he will have business enough on hand. He will not need to go into the wilderness to deny himself. And, by the way, to go alone into the wilderness is no safeguard against evil. A man never went into the wilderness in this world that the devil did not go with him. In the city, the devil has so much to do that he can not pay much attention to any one man; but in the wilderness he has you! It is a bad plan to keep by yourself too much. When you are under wholesome excitements in life, when you are made to vibrate and respond to genial influences, these things help you on toward self-denial.

It is not meant that a man should suffer because there is any good in suffering, in and of itself. Suffering is merely incidental. The good lies in the struggle in you between a higher and a lower feeling; and self-denial is the triumph of the higher feeling over the lower. Therefore, every man that suffers when he denies himself shows that the upper feeling is yet faint.

A man takes a musical instrument and undertakes to bring up one part of it, so that it shall sound louder than any other part. The moment he brings it up so that it sounds a little louder than the others, people say, "Yes, I think I do hear that upper note;" but it is so faint that a person has to put his hand to his ear to hear it. But by and by the man works the instrument so that out rolls this upper note so clearly that, although the under notes are there, every body says, "Ah! now it has come out; now I hear it; it is all right now." And a man that denies himself in the truest Christian way, does it so that the joy of the upper feelings rolls clear over the pain and suffering of the lower feelings. Where this does not take place, the self-denial is very imperfect.

3. In the line of this discussion we see, too, the foreshadowings of the cross in human life. In the whole line of development we see, in

this world, the great principle of love, which is divine, because it did not spring from any thing that we can see, but from the original creative decree. The principle of love and the nature of love were certainly as directly from God, when it was infixed in the human composition, as any thing that we can imagine. If you will watch the development of love as it takes place between the parent and the child, even in the savage state, you will see that there is infixed in the nature of human love a tendency to bear, not for one's self, but for others; to bear their troubles and cares.

The first experience we have of self-abnegation, joyful and beautiful, is where the mother bears for her child. It is not merely the love of recipiency. The love that men mostly know in their adult life is the susceptibility of being played upon by others; of being made happy by the intercourse of other natures. That is a poor love. The nature of the truer love is to exercise the parental instinct. We see *substitution* in it. If the child does wrong, the parent takes the smart, and lets the child learn a lesson—that is, to some extent, for this can not go to all lengths. Love attempts to substitute the experience of older hands and bodies and minds for the inexperience of younger ones, so that the child shall not suffer so much as it would if it had none to take care of it. Nay, we see *imputation* in parental love; so that the parent is all the time accounting with the child as if it had virtues that it has not. The parent, for instance, persuades the child to do things which the child would not do of its own accord, and gives it large credit and large praise for that which the parent incited and fixed in the child.

4. We see love suffering in life. Although the various developments of love are imperfect, yet we see the sphere of these qualities widening and widening, until we see love in all the organisms of society, as existing in the intimate relationships of friend and friend, of parent and child, and of brothers and sisters. We see in love the overshadowings of that sublime disclosure which was made on the cross, of divine love. God so loved the world that he gave his Son to die for it. And what is revealed by that fact? That God had learned to do it? No; but that the faint snatches which we see of such a nature of love as is manifested in the family, are parts of the revelation of divine truth in nature, which was more gloriously revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Parental love is John Baptist to the atoning love of Christ Jesus. And though it is very imperfect, a mere scratch, simply an outline, shorthand, as it were, yet it is sufficient to prepare us to understand, and assist us in understanding, when the disclosure is made of it, that greater love in Christ Jesus, who gave himself, not only that he might redeem the world, but that he might redeem every individual in the world, making all men at last pure

and spotless, when he shall present them before the throne of his Father in eternal glory.

This power, therefore, of perfectness to take on suffering, for the sake of shielding from suffering those that are in a lower sphere, is the secret of the Cross. The hidden mystery of Christ's sacrifice and death is not alone taught us in the New Testament. The expectation for it is created when we look out into nature and society. And when, afterward, we go back to the word of God, it is susceptible of no other interpretation but this—that God does bear the sins of men, and carry their sorrows; and that when he puts men into a world where there are pain, and sorrow, and shortcomings, and infirmities, and sufferings, he does not leave them alone. He himself dwells in the household. And as a parent that is bringing up a child inflicts suffering and permits suffering to be inflicted upon the child, for his good, watching his progress and studying to meet his wants all the way up through his education; so God is the educator of time and the world, and by suffering he develops men to that perfectness which at last shall be without suffering in the eternal sphere.

5. In the light of these disquisitions, they that are in trouble or in sorrow must learn the true way out of it. There is but one way out of suffering, and that way is upward. All other ways are adjourning it, or preparing for its recurrence in even greater measure. When men suffer in any of the vicissitudes of life, and go down toward their passions as a refuge, or go out laterally, as it were, to hide themselves in amusements, their sufferings are like the blossoms of an apple-tree that fall without fruit, multitudes of them. No lesson is learned, no victory is gained, no strength is attained. But when a man suffers, and accepts the suffering, and says, "It is a messenger of God sent to teach me to rise higher in that part of my being in which I am living; to strengthen that which is good over against that which is bad: I must think higher; I must live better; I must be nobler; I must commune more with God; I must come nearer to the invisible and eternal world: the further I go down toward the animal, the more I must suffer; and the higher I rise toward the spiritual, the less shall I suffer"—when a man does this, he has learned the lesson that every one should learn. If God has sent afflictions upon you, whether they come from yourself or from your social liabilities—from your connection one with another—the golden gate that leads into the way which is pleasant, and into the paths which are peace, is an upward gate. And the nearer a man can get to God, the less any thing on earth can afflict him. That is one reason why prayer, even when men in their own consciousness are not Christians, is so soothing and quieting. In the act of lifting the soul up above its passions into the conscious presence of the Eternal, though it be

blind, though it be the pleading of a child with an unknown Father, there is something that lifts a man in the right direction. But how much more when God is dearer to the soul than all the contents of earth; when the soul can say, "There is none on earth like thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee!" Communion with God is prayer—oh! what a refuge out of trouble. Oh! what a pavilion in which God does hide men, according to his promise, until the storm be overpast. Out of sorrow by going down? Ah! that is bad comfort. Out of sorrow by resorting to stoical philosophy? It only hardens and toughens the fibre of feeling. Out of the mere erosion of suffering? That is not a manly comfort. Oh! lift up your head. Find peace and comfort by giving flight to the higher elements of your highest nature: love, and faith, and hope, and joy in the Holy Ghost. There is the divine prescription. And there never was a trouble so grievous that there was not, in this joy in the Holy Ghost, assuagement and peace. There never was a heart so smitten that there was not restoration in true Christian faith.

When the rude ox or the fierce wind has broken off the shrub, and laid it down on the ground lacerated and torn, it lies there but a few hours before the force of nature in the stem and in the root begins to work; and soon new buds shoot out; and before the summer shall have gone round, the restorative effort of nature will bring out on that shrub other branches. And shall the heart of a man be crushed, and God send sweet influences of comfort from above to inspirit it, and that heart not be able to rise above its desolateness?

What sorrow is there that has God's liberty to ride you as a despot? What bereavements did God ever give liberty to be your tyrant? What laws did God ever give leave to come to you and say, "I own you"? You are God's, and no one else's. And there is no suffering, no sorrow, no human experience, that you have not the power to rise above, to subdue—nay, to harness to you, and make carry you. For sufferings rightly understood are, as it were, God's coursers harnessed to your chariot to bear you up. Horses and a chariot of fire did the prophet have to take him to heaven; but he is not the only one that went to heaven in a chariot of fire. Thousands are riding in chariots of fire. Sorrow is the fire; and troubles are those coursers by which myriads of men are being drawn, in that flaming chariot, heavenward.

Do not understand, then, that suffering or sorrow are incidental or accidental. They are all of them divine. Rightly understood and rightly used, sorrow is to the man what the whetstone is to the razor. You are made sharper by it. Without it you very soon lose your edge, and cut dull. With sorrow men never forget. Sorrow is the trumpet that sounds through the camp when the enemy is near, that

you may be aroused and ready to meet your adversary. Sorrow is that friendly blow by which you, sleeping in the midst of suffocating fumes, are aroused. For God does not mean that you shall perish. He loves you too well. Ah! is there not comfort in the declaration, "Whom I love I chasten, and scourge every son whom I receive"? "You had children," says God, "and you chastised them for your own pleasure; but I, that they may be partakers of my holiness." There is the Gospel; the whole of it.

Blessed are they that have sorrow. Sad are they that are without it. He must be a very good man that has lived in this world and has not had any trouble. Steamships do not care whether the wind blows or not, because they have internal motive forces; but we are not steamships, and we need troubles as winds to bear us on. We make no voyages without troubles, unless we are very good indeed.

Blessed be God, then, that gives us sorrow upon sorrow, trouble upon trouble, stroke upon stroke. These things are so many knockings at the gate of heaven, saying, "Open, Lord." Let heaven's gate fly open when they fall on you. See to it that they take you to God. See to it that they take you to higher manliness and to God. Never in sorrow be sorry for any thing which you have done that was right, and pure, and true. Never in sorrow say, "Oh! that I had the leeks and onions of Egypt, and were not obliged to eat this food of the desert which I so much loathe." When God is taking you through the wilderness toward the promised land, never look back, nor shrink. Bear your trouble, and say, "Strike, God, and strike again, and as often as needful; do any thing to me and take any thing from me; but let me have thee, and life, and life eternal.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice, O thou crowned God! that around about thee are so many that lift up holy hands, and utter ceaselessly the joy of their hearts. For love and ecstasy are praise; and they that are in joyful love, and behold thee, are remembered by thy love and mercy—how can they speak forth their joy and ecstasy? We rejoice that their number is increasing. Thither, as streams of the ocean, flow the tides of men. There are gathered together numberless creatures from amidst our own race, and multitudes of men sanctified by thy Spirit and made perfect. Here they knew privation. Here, with limitation, and inexperience, and under pressure of temptation, how poorly they walked; how they stumbled and fell! How, but for thy guiding providence, and the strength of thy right hand, would every one of them have perished! But guided by thy grace, they found at last, and inherited, the blessedness of heaven. No more tears are theirs; no more sorrow. That part of their being is closed and ended. They are as the angels of heaven. We rejoice that the companionship is so large. We rejoice that through every age thou hast garnered so many. We rejoice that the same faith and the same hopes are ours which have sustained so many men upon earth, pressed vehemently, and tried exceedingly. No tears which we shed are shed in vain. No sorrows which we feel come aimlessly. And though we can not lift up an interpreting eye upon the grandeur of thy royal ways, though our thoughts can not seek to plumb all the depths of thy wisdom, it is comforting to believe that wisdom and goodness preside over all our ways, and that our very sorrows and sufferings have their divine mission. And though for the present they are not joyous, but grievous, afterward they do work out in us the peaceable fruit of righteousness. We believe that thou art more intent upon our manhood than upon our momentary happiness. We believe that thou art doing by us, though we seem fatherless in this unsheltered world, that which we are faintly striving to do by our children. And though we are glad of the joy of to-day, we are evermore thinking in their childhood of what they shall become in later years, and are still giving or withholding that we may make them strong in virtue; wise in intelligence; men indeed.

So thou art, we delight to think, guiding us through all the spheres of this earthly experience, not so much to create joy to-day, as to create the possibility of immortality in us, and prepare us for a truer manhood—for a nobler life.

Send, then, what thou wilt, though we may weep; spare not thy hand, that is fashioning us, for our tears. Though we may beseech of thee, listen not to our prayers that we offer for things not for our own higher good. Not taking our judgment of our own wants, but taking thine own wisdom of what is best for us, thy will be done in ourselves. And though it hurts; though our hearts ache; though the day be dark; though life itself seems disfigured, and all its outward

ways are cut short, or circumscribed, oh! if thou wilt still, by the ministration of trouble, work in us a better manhood—a perfect manhood in Christ Jesus, how blessed are all these ministrations of thine; these schoolmasters of thine; these sharp afflictions; these chastising rods! And we bow ourselves before thee, rejoicing that thou hast been pleased to call us children; rejoicing that we are permitted to call thee Father; rejoicing that human life and all its events are but parts of thy divine discipline for our good; rejoicing to believe that when thou hidest thyself thou art close by, that when thou smitest it is in love, and that thou art saying, "Whom I love I chasten."

Oh! teach us this golden wisdom of suffering; and make us purer, further-sighted, in things spiritual. Grant that we may come into sympathy with each other through the bonds of a common suffering; that we may learn in our own helplessness to help those that need succor, and that out of all our troubles we may be made larger and clearer and holier, and become fit disciples of Him who waits for us in heaven.

We beseech of thee, O Lord! thou that hast redeemed us, thou in whom is all our hope and trust, that thou wilt work in us, to-day, gratitude and thanksgiving and joy in the Holy Ghost. For all thy precious words, which we remember, we give thee thanks. For the comfort which we have had of prayer, we give thee thanks. For the communion of the Spirit, we render thee thanks. For all those promises which lie before us as bridges across dark streams and ravines, a place for our feet to go over safely, we thank thee. We beseech of thee that we may walk now by faith of Him who, though not seen, is yet near to every one of us; in whose hands is all power; who reigns to intercede, and to fashion all things for the good of those whom he brings home to Zion.

Sanctify the dispensations of thy providence to every family in this congregation. Bless the parents. Bless the dear children. Bless the Sabbath day. In every household, to-day, make it radiant and joyful. May the sanctuary seem desirable, and may all the young love the ways of wisdom and the ways of instruction. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt help us so to live that men, looking upon us, shall be drawn toward things that are true, and pure, and high, and noble.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt bless thy cause in all the churches, and hasten the time, in thy good providence, when men shall not vex each other, bound together by common views and by a common faith, in a common God and Saviour. May we consult more and more the things in which we agree, and cast one side more and more the things in which we disagree. And we pray that thou wilt thus give unity of heart to all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth.

Revive thy work everywhere. For thy great grace here we thank thee. For the ingathering which we see from month to month; for new hope; for new songs; for men converted from the error of their ways, we thank thee. We thank thee for tidings of good in other churches. We beseech of thee that thou wilt

spread the light and power of thy word. And may all our land be refreshed and cleansed. And we pray that thou wilt establish justice, and true intelligence, and true virtue, and true piety throughout all the bounds of this land, and in all the world.

Lord Jesus, come! and by thy light and thy power overthrow iniquity. Bring light out of darkness. And may that blessed day at last come, so long predicted, in which thou shalt reign upon the earth, and all nations shall be subdued to thy way.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, shall be praise everlasting. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the truth to all that have heard it. Bless, we pray thee, our thoughts; and as they wander up and down through the vast and tangled experiences of life, give us thy sure word of guidance. Rise, thou Star of Bethlehem, that we may never be quite in the darkness of midnight. Let us still see above our head the clear sky, and the bright shining sun, prophesying summer in the midst of winter.

Grant, we beseech of thee, that we may not live by our sight, by things as they seem to our senses, but by faith; by this larger thought of God's purposes in our manhood; by this larger sense of the inward and hidden meaning of human life. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that every one of us may take our staff now, and travel on from strength to strength, growing purer, wiser nobler, more disinterested, more loving, more lovable, and more spiritual, until at last we stand in Zion and before God. And then, O patient and gentle Lover! O sufferer for us! we will cast our crowns at thy feet, saying, Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, be all the glory. *Amen.*

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